

This is a tape recorded by Mr. Ralph Siddoway, an interview with Mr. Acel Rowley, January of 1975. The subject is coyotes. This tape was recorded for Mr. Glade Sowards for a [Utah] House [of Representatives] meeting on the problems of predators and the livestock business. Mr. Rowley was a professional trapper, who worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He began his trapping career in the 1930s as a WPA trapper. My name is Mike Brown of the Golden Age Center, today is October 25, 1978.

Ralph Siddoway (RS): Acel, how long have you been in the trapping business?

Acel: I worked for the government better than twenty-five years the last time. I've put in most of a lifetime at this work of coyotes and trapping, controlling predatory animals.

RS: You are retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service now, aren't you?

Acel: Yes, I'm retired now.

RS: But you have worked for them for twenty-five years. And before that, you worked quite a while just as a private trapper.

Acel: Yes, lots of years private trapping.

RS: How many of those years were spent in Uintah County and that vicinity?

Acel: I would say close to thirty years in this area here. Make it about twenty-eight years.

RS: Twenty-eight years. During that period of time when you first started, I guess there were a lot of coyotes, weren't there?

Acel: Yes, there was lots of coyotes. To start with, there was coyotes in some of the areas. In the heavy lambing ranges on Diamond Mountain, the wool growers who had it high one summer, there was five of us working and we had nothing but steel traps to work with and we couldn't keep the increase down on coyote populations and most of those fellows were good men, good trappers. The methods they had to use were not good enough to keep the coyotes down to where they weren't doing a lot of damage in the sheep herds.

RS: At that time you didn't have that 10-80 poison.

Acel: No, for a while before the 10-80 poison came on, there was a new device came out that we used. I was working in Colorado then, and just shortly afterwards came back to Utah when they had the humane coyote getter, or the cyanide gun, as we know it. It was useful, but the coyotes got wise to it, which they do to about everything. There's always so many coyotes get wise. They're a very intelligent animal, I think, and a coyote is very prolific. They increase at a very fast rate. There isn't any, hardly any, natural enemies to a coyote, only man. He's about the only

one that is a natural enemy to the coyote and his increase. Once in a while an eagle or a large bird might get a small pup, but not very often.

RS: When was it we started using 10-80?

Acel: I think it was in about 1945 or the forepart of 1946. It was right along in '45 and '46.

RS: So then you could decrease the coyote population from then on, I guess?

Acel: We did. We got the coyote down to where he wasn't hurting, killing too much in the sheep herds. Right at the lowest ebb of the coyotes when he was way down, I had about thirty-six herds of sheep in my winter district and sometime, for quite a number of years, we could prorate the kills and add them up and sometimes wouldn't amount to a half a sheep to a herd, and those herds amounted to about 2,000 head to a herd on the winter ranges.

Another thing, the 10-80, according to a lot of people, will kill almost anything, but it will not kill eagles. I have never seen an eagle who was killed with 10-80 and I could go a little farther. On the forest reserve, when we put out the 10-80 baits under the supervision of the Forest Service, we put them in areas where the coyotes had done a lot of damage on the herds during the summer, and we usually put them out in an opening, out in an open park. I've heard of some of the statements on television and in the papers where the 10-80 killed everything, including the birds, which is not true. I've never seen a martin that had been killed or a mink, and I've never seen only one fox. The fox is not a carne eater, they don't eat cold meat and very few bobcats feed on it. I've seen two in the years that I've trapped, I saw two dead cats at different times that I think may have picked up, eaten, some 10-80, or they might have eaten strychnine that somebody had put out. But there's only two dead cats that I could ever say that might have eaten 10-80 because they are not a carne eater either.

RS: Then it's pretty well directed to the coyote family?

Acel: Yes it is. The coyote, the canine family, with just a small amount of 10-80 will kill them. But here again, we have this thing going around that something comes along and eats on the coyote carcass, which very few things do; dogs won't touch it. If something comes along and eats on that coyote carcass, it's not even going to hurt them. There's one thing that might eat a secondary kill which happens very infrequently, just not often enough to even worry about it and that would be if a coyote should vomit and vomit up a bunch of 10-80 meat that he had eaten and another animal would eat it, it might kill it. But other than that, this secondary kill, somebody is either misinformed or else they are misrepresenting the facts. That isn't so.

RS: Is there any tool that we have, now that they've abandoned 10-80, that you know of that we can keep these coyotes under control with?

Acel: Absolutely not. I've known a lot of men that were good with steel traps. I have two boys working, in fact three now, but one isn't too well experienced, but I have three of them working. One boy that's in Northern California, and maybe I shouldn't be throwing stuff his way, they're down to about where the only tool they have is the coyote trap.

RS: Just a steel trap.

Acel: Just a steel trap is all they're able to use. Maybe a few snares and fences. And they have got a lot of coyotes and they're having lots of trouble. They're doing a good job, the men down there, but they're like the men that are here. They've got good men in this country, but they haven't got the tools to work with, and they cannot keep the coyote population down. I'd like to make the statement that there's way more coyotes now than there was when I retired. There's lots more coyotes on the range.

RS: When did you retire, Acel?

Acel: In '65.

RS: And there are a lot more coyotes now than there was nine years ago then?

Acel: Oh, definitely.

RS: We started to use this airplane and also the helicopter to kill these coyotes. Is that an effective tool?

Acel: They are, yes, in a way, but overall, they can't get in all the country, but they do a good job where they can get into the coyotes. The area up in Craig is doing a good job from the airplane killing coyotes, and I understand that they are getting quite a few here. They're an effective tool if you can get them in the right time, right at the time the killing's going on around a herd that's having trouble. Lots of times they can stop that killing for a period of time. But it isn't an effective tool, in my estimation, of controlling coyotes entirely. I think it's one of the things that's the best you have to work with right now, anyway.

RS: They are quite expensive, I know that. The coyotes that have been killed here this winter by airplane and helicopter costed about \$80 a piece.

Acel: That's expensive for coyotes. One 10-80 station in the right place will take care of quite a few men, I do know that. They didn't have much killing and 10-80 bait were plainly marked and were put out under good supervision and in the areas where the coyotes were thickest. When I worked for the Fish and Wildlife, and I'm just sure it's the same now, they never did have a program that they meant to eradicate anything. It wasn't a war of extinction on the coyote, it was simply control work. With the tools they had then, they did a good job of it. But they did not try to kill all the coyotes. He's got a place in this country the same as everything else and there always will be coyotes. They haven't found any method yet that will get all the coyotes, or they'd all be gone.

RS: I don't think, really, that we should kill all of them. There's a place for them like you say, but sheepmen can't live with the present number of coyotes we have in Uintah County.

Acel: No, the sheepmen here, they're one after another going out of business on account of coyotes. There are just too many for them.

RS: Do you remember how many sheep outfits there used to be on Diamond Mountain, or about how many?

Acel: I wish I'd have counted that up. I think it was in the neighborhood... In the early days, eighty to one hundred thousand head of sheep was lambbed on Diamond Mountain and in that vicinity. I took count of the men that I used to work with and around and give you those figures, Ralph.

RS: I think that's pretty close, 100,000 head for lambs up there. Then they have the yearlings in addition.

Acel: Yes.

RS: Yeah, that's pretty close. Do you know how many outfits there are left now?

Acel: I think there's four, am I right?

RS: I think that's real close. I think there's five. Five sheepmen left on Diamond Mountain. Do you know whether that's been a factor in all of them getting out of the sheep business? Of course, there's other things that hurt us, too. You know Mr. Huber in Lapoint don't you?

Acel: Yes, I know that he said that the coyotes put him out of business. He couldn't put up with it. I'd like to say a few words of the habits of coyote killing and some people say, I saw one guy on television that said that it had never been a known instance proved where a coyote has killed a sheep. It had never been proven [according to the man]. That wasn't too long ago, a few months back. Personally, I have shot five coyotes that was right in the act of killing sheep. I killed three in five days on your range when I worked for you, you remember, up at Iron Springs. Then in seven days time up there, I think I killed, yeah, I killed five coyotes while I was there, just with a rifle. I wasn't calling, I was just walking and trying to keep them out of the sheep.

I've seen where they've killed anywhere from one to eighteen and twenty lambs. Well, let's see, twenty-eight lambs we counted over in Art Barnes' herd that they had killed, two coyotes in one night. Then I know of one coyote that killed seventy-three big ewes it was for Hugh Seely out on the winter range out toward Bitter Creek. And that coyote killed, it was a lone coyote that I finally killed him. He killed those ewes within three weeks and it was just before shearing time. But each one had a good pelt on and maybe anywhere from one to two lambs that they would have had which was a hell of a loss for one sheepman to take in just a few days.

RS: That's a heavy loss.

Acel: That's a heavy loss, but it's a fact and Hugh will verify that if anyone wants to call him. I've also seen where they've killed any number of deer, both young and old, they'd kill a deer, doesn't matter whether it's a big buck or what they want. Two coyotes can kill a grown deer and

I've seen where they've done it in the snow lots of times. And I've seen others that I know was killed with coyotes, and I've run coyotes away from their kills when the blood was still coming out of sheep or deer.

RS: Then coyotes do help decrease the deer population, don't they?

Acel: You bet they decrease. In fact, they are one of the thing that's making our deer herd, making them unable to make a comeback. They have a heavy hunting pressure, but the coyotes right in where the deer are having their fawns, the coyotes are having their pups and that's real easy feed for them to get a young fawn deer to take to their den for their pups. I've seen it a lot of times on Blue Mountain. In one place, I found a den right in close to a fence corner and the owner was there. He said it was a fresh killed deer there, small deer, fawn deer, was right close to the den. They had brought it in for the pups to eat, and he said, "Well, I didn't know that coyotes would do that." I said, "Why don't you watch around here?"

We didn't get all the pups. I split the den and only got two of the half-grown pups. I said, "Tell me how many fawns you see with these does around here." He told me later and he said, "Within a mile and a half or two miles, there wasn't a fawn left in that country." That was only one den that I knew there, and last summer that one adjoining your range where I was working, there was at least four dens of coyotes in there and I saw about eighteen to nineteen head of cow elk and I only saw three calves and that many elk, and we didn't see hardly any deer, old or young. The ones we did, we didn't see any fawns with.

RS: About how many lambs do you think four dens of coyotes would take?

Acel: If they were in an area where a herd was, just on the reserve for the summer, which is about three months, isn't it?

RS: Two months.

Acel: Two months. Well, I've known of them to, when sheep were counted on the reserve and counted back, I've known of them to be out about 400 lambs out of herd, and there's not that many that just lays down and dies, there's something kills them. You can find lamb carcasses nearly everywhere. Wherever a sheep herd is summering and there's a bunch of coyotes summering there also, it's hard to tell how many. They can kill between three and four hundred head of lambs out of a herd in the summer.

RS: Do you think it's possible on the forest to tell from day to day how many lambs have been killed by coyotes? Can you find actual killed?

Acel: No, not all of them. I have been with your sheep up there helping and with Art Barnes' sheep when I was just helping with the sheep and then hunting coyotes, mostly. I'm just sure that you never find any more. Probably in a timber country like that you'd be lucky to find half of them, *if* you were looking for dead lambs all the time. There's a lot of people that don't. They're not out there where they're just hunting to see what...

RS: Then some of these lambs are actually carried to the dens, too, aren't they? So if you found the lamb, you'd have to find the den, wouldn't you?

Acel: Absolutely.

RS: It takes a real expert to find a coyote den, doesn't it?

Acel: It's isn't just anybody that walks out on a coyote den. I can tell you a little story, maybe I'm taking up too much time.

RS: No, I want to hear it.

Acel: I was up on Blue Mountain, and I camped with Hoyle Chew one night, and in the morning he came back and got me. There was quite a deep late spring snow, soggy, wet snow. He was out two freshly born lambs. We could see where the two coyotes, each one of them picked up a lamb, and, this is something that I cannot understand, they each took a lamb and they went back east off of Hoyle Chew's range and across on cattle land country. We found the den not too far from the cow cabin. Hoyle told me he thought it was about fifteen miles through there, and we never did see where those coyotes laid those lambs down to rest their jaws. I don't know what they did with them. We could have missed that, because we were hurrying to keep snow from melting, but we found a den and it had plenty of lamb carcasses around there and it was on a cow range.

RS: They would have had to have been carried there, wouldn't they?

Acel: They had to be carried there, there was no other way. And I found three dens of coyotes where they was feeding their pups on calves, entirely on, I say entirely, that was the only meat that was around there, calf bones was around the dens on three different dens that I was seeing.

RS: So, if you would limit the number of lambs that a coyote kills to the ones that you can find, you wouldn't get near all the lambs that were killed, would you?

Acel: Absolutely not. I've put in too much time in that kind of business. I've been with herders when I was working before I retired. I would go to a camp where they were having trouble and a lot of times they can't even go back and show you because it's hard to find those lamb carcasses when most of the time they are partly eaten up. Sometimes they cut in two and take half of them to the den and they're not too easy to see. No, I don't think that you'd find... You'd be lucky if you found half of them if you were hunting hard all the time. I doubt if you could find fifty percent of them.

RS: I know that that's the way your loss usually turns out. If you figure the amount that you found, then count your herds, you're always out at least two for every one you find.

Acel: That's about right.

RS: That's real interesting. I'm going to send this tape to Representative Sowards and let him use

it for evidence to help us support this bill that's before the house now. The bill has been introduced by Senator Clyde from Heber City. A lot of the people have the idea that the coyote is just a cute little wild dog to play with. He is smart and he's pretty and he's very intelligent, but he's also a dangerous animal, too.

Acel: He is. You know, I'm not a very good mammalogist. I've been around one, that Dr. Durrant from out the U of U, but if I was giving an IQ [test] to the animals on the North American continent, I would put the coyote way up close to the top. I'm not acquainted with the wolf's range. They say he's naturally a cunning animal, and he's very intelligent, but he'd have to get up early in the morning to beat a wise coyote.

RS: There isn't any animal that's persistent through all the hunting and trapping and poison and every program that man has invented, there isn't one animal that has increased in number like the coyote has, is there?

Acel: No.

RS: No matter what you do, he still increases.

Acel: He has adapted himself to every change that man has made and he's also got wise to most of the methods of control work. Not many of them got wise to 10-80, but I've seen coyotes bypass a good fat bait and go on about their business. Maybe he had a full belly, but the 10-80, in my estimation, is the one best agent that they've ever had to use in the control of coyotes, and I think there's less danger for men and the public around 10-80 baits than any other methods. That's my opinion.

RS: Where that 10-80 is handled by experts, like the trappers that are employed by the Federal Fish and Wildlife, has there ever been a fatal accident to a human being?

Acel: Not that I know of. I've heard of different stories, but I've never heard of one proven. When we were getting literature, we never did get anything in my time that said that there has been a fatal accident from humans. I will say this, that in British Columbia they had some mule meat and some moose meat. I guess up there they were probably allowed to use game animals, I don't know. But they had it treated with 10-80 and there was a couple of hindquarters of it came up missing. The Fish and Wildlife Service said the government trappers, whoever was in control there, they were trying to find out where that meat went and when they found it, they found it in a native village hanging up and the natives, they had been eating it, and there wasn't any ill effects other than diarrhea. Now I don't know how long they ate on it, a few days. But it never killed anybody. And that was treated the same strength that we used it here. I think that's on record, it could be looked up if somebody wanted to. I'm sure that that little item is on record and I might be getting out of line for repeating that, but I don't think there's any harm in it.

RS: No, some people have the idea that 10-80 will kill everything, but of course that isn't true, is it?

Acel: That is not true. Absolutely not. An eagle can get fat on 10-80 and I've never seen only one or two. I never did see a red-headed turkey buzzard killed by it, and I've never seen only one or two crows, and they were the Lord's black ravens that were killed. They are a scavenger bird, but most of them it doesn't bother. That's at least where I worked with it. I never did see any and I never saw any small, fur-bearing animals that was ever killed with 10-80. I never did find even one of these little gray foxes that runs around here that had eaten on a 10-80 bait.

RS: Can you think of any reason why 10-80 should not be used the way you used it when you were trapping?

Acel: I surely don't. If you use it under that same kind of supervision, they have good competent men, which they always do. I cannot see any reason why it shouldn't be used. I'd face anybody with that, because I don't think they can prove that it is dangerous to the public. Where it's put out way after people leave the reserve in the fall, then put out on the winter range where nobody travels, very few people travel around at all where those 10-80 baits are. I don't think there's any reason why it couldn't be used under good supervision.

RS: One other question, maybe this is kind of a repeat, but since they've abolished the use of 10-80, up until the present time, are there more or less coyotes in your opinion?

Acel: Oh there's way more coyotes than there was when they were using 10-80. There's dozens of herds of sheep used to be out on the winter range without hardly any loss, and now nearly all the herds on the winter ranges suffer losses. A lot of times they go, and you can verify this, Ralph, you could go through lambing up on Diamond Mountain and not have any loss through coyotes, couldn't you?

RS: Yes.

Acel: You can't do it now.

RS: No, the last two years we haven't done it. They're really taking a lot of them before you even get them docked.

Acel: That's right.

RS: Well, I'm sure this is going to help. I'll send it in to our representative. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Acel: Not right now that I can think of. Can you think of anything, any corners I might have missed?

RS: I don't think of any. Acel, there's one thing I forgot to ask you. We used to have eleven antelope just the other side of Jensen there by that hot water for a long time, but the last three years I haven't seen one of them. Also, out in the St. John area, we used to have about twenty head of antelope. Do you think that they could have been killed by coyotes or some other

predator? What do you think has happened to them?

Acel: The coyotes can contribute to killing them a lot because they do kill them. There's one instance out here on the winter range before I retired. There was a sheepherder there having a little trouble. I went out and the coyotes had killed a couple of ewes that morning and they came to Jensen and phoned me. I went out and he told me that during the winter, through the winter, the coyotes had killed about twenty-four or twenty-five antelope in there, and he said they killed the antelope nearly all winter and didn't kill very many of his sheep. The next day was school vacation and I took one of the boys out and we found the den.

I asked Bill if he could show me if I could get somebody that was interested in it, if he could show me the carcasses. He said he was getting ready to go on trail to go back to Colorado, but he would take time if we would take him in the truck and he said, "I can think off hand of about eighteen head of them that we can drive right to that I can show you the carcasses."

We went hunting the coyote den and found it and the way we found the thing, we found an antelope with it's head cut off, it hadn't been dead only a day or so. I told the boy that was with me that if we can trail those coyotes back from that head, we could get a point on the den and we did. We found in about a quarter of a mile from the den, we found where they buried antelope heads and we went ahead and found the den. I got the pups and one of the old ones. I didn't get them both, but I got one of them. But they do kill antelope.

RS: Some people think that an antelope can outrun a coyote, but they must have some way to catch them.

Acel: They just can't keep outrunning them. Two coyotes will whipsaw antelope. One of them will turn an antelope and make him run; say one's running along the right side of him, he'll run and turn him and the antelope will run to the left and the coyote right on the other side will turn him back. They use that same method on killing grown deer. They'll just wear an antelope out. A coyote can't outrun an antelope for a little ways, but he can outstay him. He's got more endurance. I knew another story that I'll tell you sometime about Clay Basin a long time ago when my brother-in-law was on. When they were trying to get antelope to stock this country with, they couldn't figure out why they didn't increase in that Clay Basin country. They found out through a little research work of their own, that's putting in some 10-80 baits and sending the coyotes out, hey figured the coyotes are killing about sixty percent of the fawns of the antelope over in that country. They do kill them.

RS: That was verified then.

Acel: Yes.

RS: I'll be darned, I didn't know they were that bad. They're almost as bad on antelope as they are sheep then.

Acel: The thing about antelope, a little old fawn, he can't get up, he's wobble legged and can't run very fast, but an antelope has got a bad habit, just like a cow. They'll leave their fawn and feed away from them quite a ways. A cow will do the same with a newborn calf. They'll maybe trail a

mile and a half to get her a drink and then come back to that calf hid there. Well, just what in the devil is to prevent a big old stout coyote from coming out and getting either one of them, the antelope or the calf? They do both, they kill them both when they want them.

RS: That's interesting. Thanks a lot, Acel. Is there anything else we missed?

Acel: No, it sounds like you had somebody on there bragging.

RS: I think that's a real good report. I think it's going to help us.

Acel: Well, I hope it does, Ralph.

RS: Well, thanks a lot.

Acel: You're welcome. Good night.

End.